WHAT ROLE CAN PRIVATE AVIATION PLAY IN THE SUSTAINABILITY DISCUSSION?

News / Business aviation

Aviation, as a whole, is at a defining moment in the sustainability discussion. Activism toward the industry's carbon footprint is aggressive and generating media attention, especially on the private aviation front, while manufacturers are making their best efforts to build more fuel-efficient aircraft and a whole segment of green air transportation is arising from the horizon – the air mobility revolution. Yet somehow, there's a negative vibe surrounding sustainability and aviation.

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Founder and CEO of Exquisite Air Charter, Rena Davenport weighs in on the heated sustainability debate in aviation while providing her vision on how the industry can deliver tangible solutions. At Exquisite Air Charter we don't shy away from talking about sustainability in private aviation. Having an opinion and being open to debate is the first step toward finding a solution. While the aviation sector accounts only for 2,4% of global carbon emissions (and private aviation only 0.04 percent of that), it's been an easy target for those vying for harsher sustainability measures. And I agree, it's easy to criticize when private jets fly empty and for very short periods of time. Yet, that is the exception, as the motor of this industry is connecting remote locations and maximizing time efficiency.

More importantly, the public's expectations of a company's commitment to sustainability are growing by the hour. They want to understand what actions are being performed to reduce emissions while achieving net zero emissions in the near future. The best way to achieve this is by working together as an industry – authorities, manufacturers, operators, brokers, and consumers. Please, let's never forget about the consumers; we need to provide timely information to the general public and clients to manage expectations while making them part of the improvements on the way to a solution.

Short-term solutions

There are many competing efforts in the sustainability arena today in aviation. That is exactly what any industry would want. Naturally, there are some short-term and long-term options. The best immediate solutions are combined into net reductions such as the use of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) and overall offsetting, and efforts that empower end-users to choose, for instance, operators with a proactive stance regarding sustainability measures (modern aircraft or established sustainability policies).

Specifically, private aviation collaboration needs to be two-tiered and industry-wide, with agreements, targets initiatives, among others, but also day-to-day bespoke commitments between brokers and their clients, and operators and infrastructure – a mix between discussion and action. Obviously, public pressure will drive such requirements, but the collaboration should always be executed industry-wide.

I truly believe that 2023 will be a year defined by sustainability action, with a key focus on how to take the discussion toward various stakeholders and in diverse channels. Manufacturers, authorities, operators, and brokers will play a key role, yet to improve effectiveness and widespread validation, frequent information and education must be shared with end users in order to manage the message at media and public sphere levels. In other words, we play a large role in how sustainability will take shape in the upcoming years.

In conclusion, we expect business aviation to continue thriving globally while also being more prepared to endure any uncertainties along the runway, as the experience from 2022 will allow the entire industry to plan for any potential staff shortages and commercial aviation inefficiencies during key travel dates. Last but not least, we need to take it up a notch regarding sustainability actions – ordinary words are no longer viable in our era – while also actively monitoring the public perception of these defining topics.

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